

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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R 292040Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7697

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRIDGETOWN 1502

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGO BB

SUBJ: HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY VOTES PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMEND-
MENTS

REF: BTN 1494

1. HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON GOB BILL TO AMEND CONSTITUTION
CONTINUED THROUGHOUT YESTERDAY (AUGUST 28) AND INTO SMALL HOURS
OF THIS MORNING AND CONCLUDED WITH VOTE STRICTLY ALONG PARTY
LINES.

2. PRIME MINISTER BARROW, WHO HAD OPENED DEBATE PRECEDING DAY,
AGAIN SPOKE AT GREAT LENGTH. WHILE ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO
SPECIFIC AMENDMENTS AS, BY AND LARGE, HE HAD FAILED TO DO IN
EARLIER SPEECH, HE ALSO DEVOTED LARGE PART OF SPEECH TO ATTACKS
ON BILL'S OPPONENTS. PRESS, ESPECIALLY BARBADOS' LONE DAILY,
THE ADVOCATE-NEWS, CAME IN FOR ESPECIALLY SEVERE CENSURE. RE-
FERRING TO HOSTILE DEMONSTRATORS WHO HAD APPEARED IN COURTYARD
BEFORE PARLIAMENT ON FIRST DAY OF DEBATE, BARROW NOTED THEY HAD
NOT RETURNED ON THE SECOND. IMPLICATION PRESUMABLY WAS THAT
DEMONSTRATION WAS LESS THAN SPONTANEOUS AND DEMONSTRATORS NOT
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REALLY INTERESTED IN FATE OF THE BILL.

3. IN INTERVENTIONS SUGGESTING DIVISION WITHIN RANKS OF GOVERNING DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY, MRS GERTRUDE EASTMOND AND J.B. SPRINGER OF DLP DESCRIBED CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS AS TOO TIMID AND CALLED FOR REVISION ENTIRE CONSTITUTION. SPRINGER ADVOCATED, "INTER ALIA" ABOLITION OF GOVERNOR GENERAL'S POST.

4. LINDSAY BOLDEN, BARBADOS LABOR PARTY MEMBER, STATED THAT GOB HAD NOT SHOWN WHY CHANGES REQUIRED AND PLEADED THAT HOUSE NOT ADOPT "OPPRESSIVE LEGISLATION." HIS BLP COLLEAGUE HENRY FORDE NOTED THAT "AT LEAST TWO MEMBERS" ON DLP SIDE OF THE HOUSE FAVORED OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES.

5. NOTWITHSTANDING BLP ATTEMPTS TO KEEP DEBATE GOING, GOB USED STEAMROLLER TACTICS TO WIND UP HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ACTION ON BILL BEFORE ADJOURNMENT EARLY THIS MORNING. UNDER BARBADIAN PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES, VOTE ON "SECOND READING" OF THE BILL ("FIRST READING" TAKES PLACE WHEN IT IS INTRODUCED) WOULD NORMALLY BE FOLLOWED BY CONSIDERATION BY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE AND THEN BY "THIRD READING." GOB SUCCESSFULLY CONTRIVED TO TELESCOPE THESE THREE STEPS INTO SINGLE SESSION. VOTE ON BOTH SECOND AND THIRD READINGS OF BILL WAS 17-8, ALL DLP MEMBERS VOTING IN FAVOR OF ADOPTION, ALL BLP AGAINST. (SPEAKER OF HOUSE, WHO A MEMBER OF DLP, DID NOT VOTE, SINCE HE VOTES ONLY IN CASE OF A TIE.)

6. COMMENT: BILL WILL NOW GO TO SENATE WHERE GOB ALSO HAS SUFFICIENT VOTES TO ENSURE ITS PASSAGE.

7. DESPITE AMOUNT OF HEAT GENERATED BY PROPOSED CHANGES, WE DO NOT CONSIDER THEM AS LIKELY TO LEAD TO AUTHORITARIAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT OR TO UPSET EXISTING BALANCE AMONG COMPONENTS OF BARBADIAN SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. IN CONVERSATION WITH ME THIS MORNING, BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER ROBERTS COMMENTED IN SIMILAR VEIN: "WE DON'T SEE WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT." HOWEVER, ATTACKS ON BILL'S OPPONENTS BY GOB SPOKESMEN, INCLUDING BARROW, IN ASSEMBLY AND ELSEWHERE, AND REFUSAL BY GOB TO TAKE HEED OF WIDELY EXPRESSED CONCERNS WITH CERTAIN OF BILL'S PROVISIONS, HAVE CERTAINLY HAD NEGATIVE EFFECT ON PROSPECTS FOR INCREASING COOPERATION AMONG VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF BARBADIAN SOCIETY

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AND HAVE LENT SUBSTANCE TO CHARGES THAT GOB IS INSENSITIVE AND UNRESPONSIVE TO ELECTORATE'S WISHES.

SIMMS

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